











AN ADDRESS

IN COMMEMORATION  
OF THE BIRTH OF

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

DELIVERED AT THE

337TH DINNER

OF THE

NEW ENGLAND CLUB

BY

HARRISON HUME

PRESIDENT OF THE CLUB



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## ABRAHAM LINCOLN

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AN anonymous writer has said that, "as mountains mostly run in chains or clusters, crossing the plains at wider or narrower intervals, in like manner there are periods in History when great men appear in clusters also." This is true of the history of our own country. A patriotic American, wishing to discuss the great worth and noble deeds of any individual among the distinguished men of our country's history, will find a galaxy of names from which to select. Of the Revolutionary period, Washington, Hamilton, the Adamses, Jefferson, Madison, Putnam, Greene, Stark, Knox, and Marion. Of the period following the Revolution and ending with the Great Rebellion, Webster, Clay, Benton, Jackson, Calhoun, John Quincy Adams, and others of equal worth but lesser note. Of that crucial period, the men and events of which are fresh in the recollection of those who do me the honor to listen, when the life of the Nation was saved by an outpouring of blood and treasure such as the world had never known, Grant, Sherman, Farragut, Sheridan, Thomas, Seward, Chase, Stanton, Sumner, Fessenden, Beecher, and others less renowned.

The most unique among the great men of our country, indeed among the great of the world, I have not named. Let me call your attention for a little while to one who rose above all the men of his time; who, "by his courage, his justice, his even temper, his humanity, stood an heroic figure in the center of an heroic epoch;" the one providential leader, the indispensable hero of a great drama; who "was the embodiment of the self-denial, the courage, the hope, and the nobility of a nation;" whose fame will grow brighter with succeeding years; whose name will be revered in all coming time wherever men love liberty; the great central figure of our Civil War; the Emancipator of a Race,—Abraham Lincoln. As the rising generation know little, and I fear care less, about the sufferings and heroic struggles of the men who fought the Great War for the preservation of the Union, so we, surrounded by all the comforts and luxuries of civilized life, and in the enjoyment of great public and private blessings, give little heed to the self-sacrifice, courage, and patriotism of the Pioneers of the Republic, whose history is the history of our liberty. From the day the Mayflower furled her tattered sails in the harbor of Plymouth to the present time there has existed in America the pioneer spirit, caused partly by a desire for freedom and independence, and partly by that Anglo-Saxon lust for land which is a characteristic of the race. Hardy and enterprising men have gone forth from the older settlements with ax and gun in hand; have entered the trackless wilderness; and upon the banks of distant rivers, laboring with diffi-

culties, languishing perhaps from disease, and in deadly peril from a savage foe, have established new homes. The forest disappears by their sturdy arms, the school-house and the church appear, law and order soon prevail, a new State is formed, a new member enters the political family, and a new star is added to the "Old Flag."

From a race of pioneers came Abraham Lincoln; to such a race he belonged. It is now generally believed that he descended from the Lincolns who settled in Hingham, Mass., in 1638, some of whom became famous in the Revolutionary War. Of such descent, however, he had no knowledge, as his immediate ancestors were poor, humble, and illiterate people, and had never achieved the slightest distinction. His grandfather, Abraham Lincoln, in 1780, followed Daniel Boone to Kentucky, where, while at work in the field with his three sons, he was killed by the Indians. The youngest son, Thomas, the father of the President, then a child of seven, barely escaped capture. The head of the family being gone, the widow moved to a more thickly settled neighborhood, and raised her children. Thomas Lincoln, the father of Abraham, is described as an easy-going, lazy man, "entirely without ambition, but not without self-respect." In 1806 he married Nancy Hanks. Herndon, Mr. Lincoln's law partner for eighteen years, said Mr. Lincoln told him while "riding the circuit" that his mother was the illegitimate daughter of a Virginia gentleman. If such was the case, Mr. Lincoln's great ability was not such a violation of the immutable laws of heredity as the world

has heretofore supposed it to be. Certain it is that he inherited from his father that friendly and jovial spirit which made him lovable, and from his mother that love of learning and that melancholy which ever characterized him.

In Hardin County, Kentucky, on the 12th day of February, 1809, Abraham Lincoln was born. His early life, as he once said, can be described with a line of Gray's "Elegy," as —

"The short and simple annals of the poor."

Yet it was not the poverty of squalid sections of large cities; not "that conscious and humiliating indigence which is every day forced to contrast itself with neighboring wealth on which it feels a sense of grinding dependence." As Mr. Blaine said of James A. Garfield, it was the poverty of Henry Clay, of Andrew Jackson, of Daniel Webster, of U. S. Grant, and of a large majority of the great men of America. Said Mr. Webster in one of his great speeches in the campaign of 1840, "It did not happen to me to be born in a log cabin, but my elder brothers and sisters were born in a log cabin, raised amidst the snowdrifts of New Hampshire, at a period so early that when the smoke first rose from its rude chimney and curled over the frozen hills, there was no similar evidence of a white man's habitation between it and the settlements of the rivers of Canada. Its remains still exist. I make to it an annual visit. I carry my children to it to teach them the hardships endured by the generations which have gone before them. I love to dwell on the tender recollections, the kindred ties, the early affections, and the touching nar-

ratives and instances which mingle with all that I know of this primitive family abode." As has been said, the poverty of the frontier is no poverty. "It is but the beginning of wealth, and has the boundless possibilities of the future always opening before it." The men raised upon the frontier were remarkable men, broad-minded, independent, ambitious, heirs to the title of freeholder. They did not look back to their early struggles with poverty and hardship with shame. They were proud to point to the obstacles they had overcome. So with Abraham Lincoln. His was "the poverty of the frontier." Not a want of the necessities of life, for of these there was a rude plenty,—the soil brought forth an abundance, the forests were filled with game, the streams were teeming with fish,—but a want of the luxuries of life of that day, which have become the necessities of this. Yet, in the sense in which we hear the word, Lincoln was poor and his education defective. He attended school for about a year, where "readin', writin', and cipherin'" to the rule of three were indifferently taught. Of all the self-made men of America, Lincoln owed the least to books, to schools, and to society. What others knew by reading, he knew by action. He had great power of concentration, and his ability to analyze was unexcelled. He was not precocious, and was slow in the acquisition of knowledge, but singularly retentive of what he gained. He could obtain but few books to read, but these became a part of himself. He was possessed of an intense desire to learn, created in part by his excellent mother before her early death, and fostered by his good step-

mother. At the age of nineteen he had so far outstripped his fellows that admiring friends presaged an unusual career. The education of the schools he had not obtained, but he had communed with Nature; and

“To him who in the love of Nature holds  
Communion with her visible forms, she speaks  
A various language.”

“Nature,” said Carlyle, “is the foundation and ground-plan on which you may build whatsoever of great and true has been given you to build.” Lincoln’s simple heart did not resist its sacred influences, and it doubtless filled “his spirit with thoughts of boundless power.”

Some one has said that “Washington is now only a steel engraving.” How little do the men of to-day know of the real Washington!

“As stands the pyramid, a mystery  
Cleaving wedge-like the misty realm of time,  
And hides within its depths the unknown king  
’Twas built to memorize; so common fame  
Covers with cloudy friction all the real man,  
And leaves a shadow to the worshipers.”

The tendency with the American people,—and probably they are not an exception,—is to apotheosize their great men. This is not without beneficial results. For the fame of noble men is at once the most enduring and most valuable public possession. It stimulates the young to deeds of righteousness and heroism. It uplifts the nation. The character of those it seeks to almost deify is in fact a true measure of the nation’s greatness. He who, however, speaks or writes of a

nation's heroes and benefactors, should seek the truth. "Give me the truth," said Napoleon to his marshals. "Paint the wart upon my face," said Cromwell, and we have a true likeness. Let us know the real man, not the fictitious one. Let us not make "immaculate saints of the comparatively good, or blacken the moderately bad into demons."

The early life of Abraham Lincoln was that of a simple, honest, backwoodsman. This was what Horace Greeley has called "the rail-splitting era of his life." In body tall, raw-boned, and muscular, a giant in strength, proficient in athletic sports, his comrades said "he could strike the hardest blow with ax or maul, jump higher and farther, run faster than any of his fellows, and there was no one far or near who could lay him on his back." He could fight, and did fight when necessary, and of course, among a rough people he was popular and a leader. He was a thoughtful, dreamy youth, and yet mirthful. He was evidently a better as well as a more intelligent boy than his fellows, and yet he made no such claim, and doubtless had sufficient reason for not doing so. In one of his scrap-books we find these lines:—

"Abraham Lincoln is my name,  
And with my pen I write the same.  
I will be a good boy, but God knows when."

All that has been written and said about his sorrowful boyhood is the sheerest nonsense. He who thinks differently does not know the boy nature. With fish to catch, snares to set, prairie chickens and wild turkeys

to shoot, with stomach well filled with "corn dodgers and common doings," as his was, no boy is long unhappy. Like all boys that love books and reading, he did not love work. His employer said "he liked his pay and his dinner better than he did his work." However, like all the boys around him, when he did anything, he chopped timber, split rails, plowed the fields, and hoed corn. So, living and laboring, he grew to manhood.

"The uncleared forest, the unbroken soil,  
The iron bark that turns the lumberer's ax,  
The rapid that o'erbears the boatman's toil,  
The prairie hiding the mazed wanderer's tracks, —

Such were the needs that helped his youth to train —  
Rough Culture! — but such trees large fruit may bear,  
If but their stocks be of right girth and grain."

Then taking his scanty wardrobe in a little bundle, he left his father's house and "struck out" in the world, seeking and faithfully doing such work as he could find. He was farmer, flat-boatman, clerk, store-keeper, volunteer in the Black Hawk War, postmaster, surveyor, and finally lawyer; learning from books when they could be procured, but more from observation and action, unwittingly making preparations for the performance of a greater task than was ever before laid upon mortal man. In every position he won and retained the confidence of his fellow-men. He became known as "Honest Abe Lincoln," a title greater than royalty could bestow, and one that was not only to go with him to his grave, but one that will be spoken by generations yet to be.

We will not dwell upon this period of his life, except to notice one event that had a marked and unfortunate effect upon his future career. He loved and was betrothed to Ann Rutledge. She died, and in her grave Mr. Lincoln buried his heart. He afterwards married, but without love and unfortunately. The consequence, unhappiness, daily sorrow and trial, borne with patience and without complaint. The death of Miss Rutledge developed to an alarming degree the tendency to melancholy inherited from his mother. For a time he was on the verge of insanity, but finally recovered through the care and encouragement of kind friends. He was never again the same man. The truth is, however, that his melancholy in after-life was caused, not so much by the memory of a dead girl, as by the want of affinity for a living woman. It was at this time that he saw and committed to memory that poem that will ever be associated with his name, the first stanza of which is as follows:—

“Oh! why should the spirit of mortal be proud?  
Like a fast-flitting meteor, a fast-flying cloud,  
A flash of the lightning, a break of the wave,  
He passes from life to his rest in the grave.”

Overcoming many difficulties in the pursuit of legal knowledge, he had become a lawyer. To this profession he devoted his life, until, with the exception of a single term in Congress, he was elected to the Presidency. He could never be called very learned in the law, and yet in all the elements that constitute a great lawyer, he had few equals. He was a growing lawyer.

He early learned the necessity of a careful preparation of his cases. He found himself lacking in the power of close and sustained reasoning. This defect he remedied by a persistent study of mathematics. He "rode the circuit" with some of the ablest and most energetic men the country has produced, men who acquired a national reputation as Senators, Judges, Cabinet Ministers and Generals,—Davis, Douglas, Trumbull, S. T. Logan, Stuart, Browning, Baker, Shields, Hardin, and others. He was the superior of some, the peer of them all. His was the true secret of success, for, as Judge Davis said, "The framework of his mental and moral being was honesty, and a wrong cause was poorly defended by him." He had a logical and direct mind, great power of comparison, "an intuitive insight into the human heart," and was full of wit and humor. The late Judge Drummond, one of the most learned and upright judges of this country, speaking of Mr. Lincoln as a lawyer, said, "I have no hesitation in saying he was one of the ablest lawyers I have ever known." For, said he, "let him be thoroughly aroused, let him feel that he was right, and he would come out with an earnestness of conviction, and power of argument, and wealth of illustration, that I have never seen surpassed."

The story of Mr. Lincoln's pioneer life and of his experience and success as a lawyer is but the prelude to that of his career as a politician and a statesman. He early developed a love for political life and political preferment. This continued with him throughout his entire career. He spoke the truth when he wrote a

friend, "Now, if you should hear any one say that Lincoln does not want to go to Congress, I wish you, as a personal friend of mine, would tell him you have reason to believe he is mistaken. The truth is, I would like to go very much." He was ambitious of political honors, but never at the sacrifice of principle. As a politician, "he had a cunning that was genius." "You do not know Lincoln," said Mr. Washburne to a friend, "he is as good a politician as he is a President."

He began his political career as a member of the Legislature of Illinois, at the age of twenty-five. He was a Whig. He had been a Whig from boyhood, and he remained true to Whig principles until the day of his death. Illinois was a very Gibraltar of Jacksonian Democracy of the most virulent type. It continued a Democratic State, and never cast an electoral vote for other than the nominee of that party until it cast it for Mr. Lincoln. For twenty years he fought the unavailing battles of his party. He saw it die, and saw another born.

"Ill-fate, ill-feeling, ill-report, lived through,  
And then he heard the hisses change to cheers."

At the age of thirty-one he became the leader of his party in the State. From that time, although there were many very able and distinguished men in the party, that leadership was never contested.

It is a singular fact that the two men whose lives were destined finally to have the most influence on the great question of slavery, that had agitated the country to a greater or less degree from the adoption

of the Constitution, were citizens of Illinois, — Stephen Arnold Douglas and Abraham Lincoln. Early in life they became the representative combatants of their respective parties and so continued to be until Abraham Lincoln took the oath of office as President of the United States, with Mr. Douglas as a broken-hearted spectator. Their personality entered into many contests, until they became in 1858 the representatives of Freedom and Slavery, and the eyes of the whole country rested in intense interest upon them.

It has been truly said, "Whoever chooses to trace the remote origin of the American Rebellion, will find the germ of the Union armies of 1861-5 in the Mayflower, and the inception of the Secession forces between the decks of that Dutch slaver which planted the fruit of her avarice and piracy in the James River Colonies in 1620." Two utterly hostile and irreconcilable ideas had been planted on this continent. Between them there was to be an "irrepressible conflict;" yet in the fullness of time, in tears, in agony, and in blood, the Pilgrim faith — "God is no respecter of persons; in his sight all men are free and equal" — was destined to conquer, and "justice, which is the unchanging, everlasting will to give each man his right," was to prevail.

To trace in detail the conflict between Freedom and Slavery is not now our purpose. Our fathers uttered the sublime truths of the Declaration of Independence with foot on the neck of the slave. When they formed a Union and established a Constitution they compromised with slavery and sent the Republic

forth upon its mission half slave and half free. That a great majority of them desired its peaceful extinction is historically true. The spirit, however, that desired this, "became itself extinct with the occasion and the men of the Revolution." The boundaries of the Union were enlarged by the acquisition of new territory. Slavery became profitable, demanded and secured extension, until in time it became a great money power, wielded by a political aristocracy. Cotton, its chief product, constituted largely our foreign commerce, and our mercantile classes were thus subsidized. The pulpit became cowardly, the press servile, statesmen "bribed by ambition" sycophantic, and parties hypocritical. Suddenly and without premonition, in 1820 the people of this country were made to realize that beneath the fabric of their government was a seething volcano whose latent fires now burst upon their view. The request of Maine for admission to the Union caused an agitation that shook the country from center to circumference. As the fathers compromised, so did their descendants, and slavery was recognized, geographically bounded, and the vexed question was thus to be for ever settled, the volcano to become extinct. There was, however, a class of brave men and devoted women who resolved that there should be no more compromises with slavery, and demanded its abolition. They were denounced, libeled, abused by parties, press, and churches, the right of petition denied them by Congress, mobbed by the people. The spirit which animated them can best be described by the words of their great leader, Mr. Garrison: "I am in earn-

est, — I will not equivocate, — I will not excuse, — I will not retreat a single inch, — and I will be heard." He was heard, and to-day his statue adorns Boston's proudest avenue.

Mr. Lincoln was not one of this class. Although he hated slavery, and said, "If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong," he was not an Abolitionist. Born in a slave State, his early and life-long friends natives of slave States, living all his life among people who detested Abolitionists, he never viewed slavery from the Abolitionist's standpoint, and only struck it down when he became convinced that to do so was "his last card" in saving the Union.

Strong in his allegiance to the Whig party, an admirer of Henry Clay, he had acquiesced in the party policy. His soul had never been aroused to the enormity of the "crime against freedom." He was slow in coming to a conclusion. His was not "the keen spirit that seizes the prompt occasion — makes the thought start into instant action, and at once plans and performs, resolves and executes." When, however, he did come to a conclusion, he was as firm as the eternal hills. The repeal of the Missouri Compromise by the pro-slavery party of the country led by Stephen A. Douglas, roused him to action. He knew that this broke down the last barrier to the extension and perpetuation of slavery. The heart of Stephen A. Douglas was to him an open book. He knew the danger and the extent of his ambition. He knew that Douglas would follow any path that he believed led to success. Mr. Lincoln also knew that for *him*

the hour had struck, and the country was soon to learn that he was the man for the hour. As I have said, he was not an Abolitionist, but he believed it to be his duty to resist with all his might the extension of slavery and the aggressions of the slave power. He knew that the reason and the hearts of the people must be reached. By arduous toil he prepared himself to meet the adherents of slavery in the forum of debate. In oratory he had been trained by the contests he had had with some of the brightest men of his time. He was a master of logic and had great reasoning powers. He knew that he had "right, justice, philosophy, the enlightened opinion of mankind, history, the Constitution, and good policy on his side." Always simple, earnest, and entirely sincere, "at times," says his best biographer, Mr. Arnold, "he rose to the very highest eloquence; on rare occasions when greatly moved, when carried away by some great theme, with some vast audience before him, he seemed at times like one inspired. He would begin in a diffident and awkward manner, but as he became absorbed in his subject, then there would come a wonderful transformation. Self-consciousness, diffidence, and awkwardness, disappeared. His attitude became dignified, his figure seemed to expand, his features were illuminated, his eyes blazed with excitement, and his action became bold and commanding. Then his voice and everything about him became electric, his cadence changed with every feeling, and his whole audience became completely magnetized. Every sentence called forth a responsive emotion."

Mr. Douglas, his opponent, was the idol of his party, and a most formidable antagonist; a self-made man, bold, aggressive, yet genial in temperament. He was a born orator, and his long training had made him an admirable debater. He was called "The Little Giant." His objective point was the Presidency. By advocating the repeal of the Missouri Compromise he had secured the favor of the South, and sought to hoodwink the North by loud and persistent advocacy of what he called "Popular Sovereignty;" which Mr. Lincoln thus defined,— "That, if any one man choose to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object." He did not care, he said, "whether slavery was voted up or voted down, as long as the people acted under the great principle of popular sovereignty."

Mr. Lincoln opened the campaign of 1858 as a candidate for Senator against Douglas "with a memorable saying that sounded like a shout from the watch-tower of history:—"A house divided against itself can not stand. I believe this Government can not endure permanently, half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do believe it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States,— old as well as new, North as well as South." His friends warned him that such a speech would be fatal

to his success,—that he would be charged with advocating a dissolution of the Union. He was immovable. “It is true,” said he, “and I will deliver it as written.” “Let defeat come if it must, but let these truths be discussed by the people.” Then upon the open prairie, upon this virgin soil of the Republic, in the presence of thousands, yes, in the presence of the whole Nation, these two giant intellects, these great representatives of freedom and slavery, did discuss these great truths. Douglas attempted to dodge and equivocate, but Mr. Lincoln held him to the real issue,—“Is slavery wrong?” “That,” said he, “is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the great struggle between these two great principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle. In different shapes it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, ‘You work, and toil, and earn bread, and I’ll eat it.’ No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.”

Although Mr. Lincoln lost the Senatorship, yet, in consequence of these great debates, he gained what Mr. Douglas lost,—the Presidency. Once more he

appeared before the people (at the Cooper Institute in New York) and demonstrated his great power, then they knew that he was the man for the hour; that he was the man to lead the hosts of freedom in the great contest of 1860, now at hand.

Mr. Seward had been the recognized leader of the Republican party, and it was generally believed that he was to be its candidate. He did not, however, possess the confidence of the people. They did not question his great ability, nor did they fail to recognize the fact that he had ably championed the cause of freedom, but they doubted his sincerity. Henry Clay had said, "Mr. Seward is a man of no convictions." Subsequent events proved that he was right. On the 12th day of January, 1861, he said in substance, "I am willing to vote for an amendment to the Constitution to make slavery perpetual." The people also believed that the Albany Dynasty would be perpetuated under the name of Republican. Again, the people knew (and what was true then is true to-day) that since the days of Alexander Hamilton New York had never produced a statesman that had real convictions, or who could subordinate the love of party power and party plunder to true patriotism and love of country. They rejected Mr. Seward and nominated Mr. Lincoln. He was elected; and then began the consummation, on the part of the South, of a conspiracy that had long contemplated the founding of an empire whose corner stone should be slavery; that should extend from the Ohio to the Gulf, include the land of the Montezumas and the islands of the sea.

From his election to the 4th of March, Mr. Lincoln could be only an anxious spectator. He saw the chief officers preparing to scuttle the Ship of State,—plundering the treasury, scattering the army and navy, that both might be useless when the hour came to strike, robbing the arsenals, seizing forts and other property of the Nation. Worse than all, he saw his party in Congress “shrink from the responsibility of success.” Hoping to avert war, they were willing that slavery should become immortal. While South Carolina was actually gathering and disciplining her armies, erecting fortifications, and preparing for hostilities, delegates from the free States gravely met in convention in Washington in response to the cry from the servile traders and more servile politicians, “Let us try the virtue of new protestations, new prostrations, more groveling abasement,” and such further humiliation as will satisfy the demands of the slave power. Let us compromise again, and, if need be, make slavery perpetual in this so-called “Land of the Free.”

Tenderly and affectionately he bade his friends and neighbors what proved to be a farewell for ever, and went forth to assume a task greater than that of Washington, greater than men living or dead had ever assumed. The situation was indeed appalling. Seven States were “out of the Union,” as they termed it. The others were in reality preparing to follow. However the people might feel, the leading conspirators in every State were determined to succeed in breaking up the Union. The military spirit was rife. Men were rushing to arms. Jefferson Davis announced

that "the time for compromise has passed." "We are determined," said he, "to maintain our position, and make all who oppose us smell Southern gunpowder and feel Southern steel." The treasury was empty and the government without credit. Treason was rampant in every branch of the service. Still the North did not realize the situation. Mr. Lincoln did not realize it. There can be no doubt that when he left home he still thought that all would yet be well. From this peaceful state of mind he was to have a rude awakening. As he approached slave territory, he found that he would have to pass through Baltimore secretly and in the night, to escape assassination. To my mind, there is not the slightest doubt that he would have been assassinated had he made the journey as originally intended. A few months ago, I had the pleasure of reading the as yet unpublished manuscript of "Personal Recollections" of a gentleman who occupied an important position during Mr. Lincoln's administration, and who afterwards represented this Government as minister to a foreign country. At the request of Mr. Seward he went to Baltimore and made investigations on his own account. He was admitted to the secret counsels of the murderous villains, and reported to Mr. Seward, who acted finally on that report. Mr. Greeley thought Mr. Lincoln should not have changed his course, as his time had not come. Mr. Blaine says he did it "against his will and to his subsequent chagrin and mortification." Mr. Lincoln once said, "I thought it wise to run no risk where no risk was necessary."

And now, having reached the capital in safety, he is about to take the oath of office. This lowly-born son of the great Republic, this great example of the possibilities of a free government, stands upon the steps of the Capitol, cool and self-possessed, though facing traitors whichever way he might turn. Near him stands Buchanan, the imbecile President, who had wallowed in the mire of slavery during a long political career, and who was now retiring from the government of a country he had done his best to destroy. Awaiting to administer the oath of office was Chief Justice Taney, who had dragged the judicial ermine in the dust that he might closer rivet the chains of the slave and extend the curse over freedom's soil. Here too was Douglas, who realized that the object of his ambition was for ever beyond his grasp. Like Clay and Webster he had prostituted his great abilities in the service of slavery, in vain. Like them he was to go down to his grave a broken-hearted and disappointed man. Here too was the towering form of Scott, Virginia's son, loyal to the flag, whose great service to his country in its supreme hour of peril has never been properly recognized. Here stood Chase and Seward, Sumner and Wade, Hamlin and Fessenden, and Baker, so soon to die for his country.

"The Inaugural," said Horace Greeley, "was a document that will be lingered over and admired long after we shall have passed away." It was a masterpiece of persuasion and conciliation. Mr. Lincoln, however, like his party, was ready to desert, in the moment of his triumph, the principles for which he had so gal-

lantly contended. He was ready to lay his convictions of the wrong of slavery on the altar of compromise. He had yet to realize that nothing that he could say would change the purpose of men who had plotted treason for thirty years. He had yet to realize, to quote his own words spoken after four years of trial and sorrow, "that the Almighty has his own purpose;"—"woe unto the world because of offenses, for it must needs be that offenses come, but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh;"—yet to realize that God had willed "that every drop of blood drawn by the lash should be paid by another drawn by the sword;" that all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil must be sunk; yet to realize that he and the Nation must be made to feel that "the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether."

While he assured the people that he should take care "that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States," how solemnly and touchingly did he plead for peace!

"In your hands, my dissatisfied countrymen, and not in mine, are the momentous issues of civil war. The government will not assail you."

"You can have no conflict without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in heaven to destroy the government, while I have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect, and defend it.'"

"I am loath to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies; though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection.

“The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field and patriotic grave, to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”

In the formation of his Cabinet, Mr. Lincoln encountered many difficulties. In a general way, he early determined its composition. Its final construction was not completed until after his inauguration. He thought it wise to call to his side his competitors in the nominating convention. This was judicious, as tending to bring to the support of his administration the various factions of his party. This decision, however, proved to be a constant source of embarrassment during his entire administration. The Republican party was in the main composed of the Whig and Democratic elements, and each strove for the preponderance of influence in the new administration. It was Mr. Lincoln's desire to give each element an equal representation, and this he finally did. Mr. Seward expected and desired to be the Premier. “He had come to believe,” said Mr. Hamlin, “that he would not be offered the position, and, to let himself down, was proclaiming that he would not take the place if offered to him.” The note offering him the place was sent to Mr. Hamlin, and he was authorized and directed not to deliver it, unless, after consulting with Judge Trumbull, they should approve of it. They did approve, the note was delivered, and Mr. Seward accepted. He then exerted all the influence he had, and it was great, to prevent Mr. Chase's appointment, going so far as to withdraw his acceptance.

Mr. Lincoln in a note requested him not to do so, and in a final interview told him that the only change he should make in his Cabinet was to substitute the name of Wm. L. Dayton in place of his. Mr. Seward yielded then, as he ever afterwards did, to the inflexible will of the President. Mr. Chase was made Secretary of the Treasury;—cold, stern, dignified, with great solemnity of countenance, which perhaps was one of the causes of his success, for, as Tom Corwin said, “If you would succeed in life, you must be solemn, solemn as an ass.” He was possessed of great intellectual attainments, and always acted from a stern sense of justice. He never established intimate relations with Mr. Lincoln. He, as well as Mr. Seward, never overcame his disgust with the American people for selecting as Chief Magistrate the undignified rail-splitter in preference to himself, and he always desired, as did Mr. Seward, to succeed Mr. Lincoln. This ambition was a constant source of friction until it caused his retirement from the Cabinet.

When we consider that without financial success we could not have carried on the war a year, we realize what a claim Mr. Chase has on the respect and gratitude of his countrymen. He managed the finances of the Government from March, 1861, to July, 1864, and we believe the considerate judgment of all will be, in the years to come, that, next to Abraham Lincoln, to Salmon P. Chase more than to any one man we owe the preservation of the Union and the maintenance of the Constitution.

Mr. Lincoln finally concluded to make Mr. Simon Cameron a member of his Cabinet. This he undoubtedly did with reluctance, and in a short time it was evident that he had made a mistake. “How much is there in it?” was

the motive of the Pennsylvania politician, then as now, and the war department soon fell into confusion. Mr. Lincoln bowed him out and substituted the lion-hearted Stanton, who became the master-mind of the war during the eventful years that followed. He had an iron will, and was at times harsh and unyielding, but always loyal to the core. He it was who never tired. He raised and equipped army after army, and hurled them on the foe. He saw, with righteous indignation, those armies well-nigh destroyed by the incompetency of their commanders. Still he wrought on. Conciliation and compromise were not in his lexicon. "This Rebellion must and shall be crushed," was his reply to the doubting, cowardly, and disloyal. Though he never understood his chief, yet he was loyal to him, and returned in full measure the confidence reposed in him. He gave his life to his country, though he did not fall on the field of battle. His name will ever be associated in the ages to come with that of Lincoln, whose strong right arm he was.

The want of confidence in Mr. Seward by the people was very soon fully justified. It was quickly seen that he was a statesman who "by indirection found direction out;" that his policy was to meet "exaction with concession," and "violence with peace." Never in earnest himself, he could not realize that the South was in earnest. He negotiated with Peace Commissioners from the South, assured them that Sumter should be evacuated, and when he found it would not be, notified the South Carolina authorities that it was to be re-enforced. He urged the President to drop the Slavery question, evacuate Sumter, convene Congress, declare war with France and Spain, and make Great Britain and Russia toe the mark,—in short,

adopt a policy outlined by him, and put its execution into his hands. He was soon to learn, however, as was every other member of the Cabinet, "that where McGregor sat was the head of the table;" that Abraham Lincoln was President of the United States; that, if he had a dispatch of great importance to write, Mr. Lincoln was capable of making corrections and improvements in it. So, yielding to the strong common sense, sagacity, and superior ability of his chief, he rendered great and patriotic services to his country. These will be gratefully remembered, and his faults will be forgotten.

During the first weeks of his administration, Mr. Lincoln had little opportunity to attend to the vital affairs of state. He was besieged by office-seekers. Those of his party that had ever been Whigs had enjoyed power so little that they were hungry for the loaves and fishes. The Democratic party had ever been "an organized appetite" for office, and very many came out of both parties who were far more anxious for office than they were for the rights of the slave. During this time, Mr. Lincoln said, "I feel like a man letting lodgings at one end of the house while the other is on fire."

So Mr. Lincoln and his Cabinet sat and listened to the endless whine of office-seekers. So they continued the "Little Bo Peep" policy of

"Let them alone, and they'll all come home,  
Wagging their tails behind them."

Mr. Lincoln's great heart always led him to conciliate. He wanted to conciliate the whole South, and he must conciliate the Border States. It was once said that he

would like to have God on his side, but he must have the Border States. Success dulls the edge of criticism, and as "all is well that ends well," the world will say that conciliation was the true policy. We shall always believe, however, that the conciliation needed from the beginning to end was "that practiced by Hood's butcher, when he was advised to try it on a drove of sheep."

"He seized upon the foremost wether,  
And hugged, and lugged, and tugged him neck and crop  
(If tails came off he did not care a feather) ;  
Then, walking to the door and smiling grim,  
He rubbed his forehead and his sleeve together,  
There, I've *conciliated* him."

On that memorable morning in April, 1861, in the harbor of Charleston, a shell rose, and with graceful curve fell upon the doomed fort. Conciliation and compromise were at an end. Then rose up, with appalling majesty, the descendants of the men who had said at Concord, "That bridge is ours, and we mean to go across it ;" saying, "That fort is ours, and we will repossess it." "We will have one Union undivided, one Constitution, and one liberty, and that universal." With faith in God and the justice of their cause, they marched on to the baptism of blood.

The free States rose to their feet as one man. Armies were raised and a navy was rapidly built. Still few men at the North, excepting Sherman, and those who knew the spirit of the South, realized the gigantic task before them. The disaster at Bull Run brought them to a proper sense of the situation. Yet so utterly unprepared for war was the North, that there was not a single man capable of

leading its armies. Scott having retired, McClellan, who commanded at a skirmish in West Virginia that Rosecrans won, was called to command. He was called the "Little Napoleon" by the newspapers, and the people were led to believe that he was to be the savior of his country. Never was there a greater failure; never was there a greater disappointment. The country furnished him with the finest army that the world ever saw. After months of inaction and useless show, he led it, against the President's better judgment, to a region of which he was totally ignorant, there to fritter away its strength in unavailing battles, in which he took no personal part.

The failure of McClellan and the condition of affairs in the West increased the prestige and hopes of the South, and disheartened the North. The true friends of the Union saw that the cause of the Rebellion must be removed. The sentiments and policy of the generals in our armies, with a few exceptions, were pro-slavery. They believed that the Abolitionists were the cause of the war, and desired to restore the Union with Slavery intact.

Mr. Lincoln, moved by his sympathy and love for the Border States, pleaded for gradual and compensated emancipation. In urging this upon Congress, he said, "Fellow-citizens, we can not escape history. In giving freedom to the slave we assure freedom to the free. We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last best hope of earth. The way is plain, peaceful, generous, just, — a way which if followed the world will for ever applaud, and God must for ever bless." From this plea there were no results. Then his mind gradually turned to the last resort. Every influence was brought to bear for and against, by the friends and enemies

of emancipation. Even McClellan, having failed as a general, tried his hand at statesmanship, and had the audacity to write the President, warning him that "a declaration of radical views, especially upon slavery, will rapidly disintegrate our present armies." On the floor of Congress, Mr. Crittenden, representing the Border States, made an eloquent and touching appeal for Mr. Lincoln to withhold the Proclamation. Mr. Lovejoy of Illinois said in reply, that "in a niche in Freedom's holy fane, Mr. Lincoln would stand proudly, nobly, generously, with shattered fetters and broken chains and slave-whips at his feet," if he would but issue the Proclamation. Prayers were sent up in every church, farmhouse, and cabin. The great "War Governor" of Massachusetts, finally instructing a special messenger to urge emancipation, knelt in the executive chamber and poured out his soul to God, as only such a man could do, imploring the divine help to guide the President aright.

Mr. Greeley once said that Mr. Lincoln having a characteristic of "never putting down his foot till he felt sure there was firm ground beneath it, he never feared to lay his whole weight upon it when once fairly down." He was not ready to put down his foot, and wrote Mr. Greeley that "my paramount object is to save the Union, and not either to save or destroy slavery." He did not believe that public sentiment was prepared for emancipation. He was waiting for the revolution in public sentiment that he knew was slowly but surely progressing, so that when action came the opposition would not be strong enough to defeat his purpose. Believing that the time had come, without consulting with his Cabinet, he prepared the

Proclamation. After Antietam, a fruitless field, a name writ in water, invoking the "considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God," he emancipated the slave and became the Liberator of a Race.

"Ring and swing,  
 Bells of joy ! on morning's wing  
 Send the song of praise abroad ;  
 With a sound of broken chains  
 Tell the nation that he reigns  
 Who alone is Lord and God !"

The Proclamation had no immediate effect upon military operations, and served to increase by the cry of "Abolition War" that disloyalty that began to honeycomb the North. But the backbone of the Confederacy was broken, for its system of labor was demoralized, and this was its strong point. The North stretched out its hands to Ethiopia, and more than two hundred thousand emancipated slaves donned the Union blue. Have we forgotten this fact? Let the truckling politician of to-day answer. The war went on. Burnside sent men to useless and certain death at Fredericksburg. Hooker fought Chancellorsville piecemeal, and lost; and Lincoln bore the sorrows of the Nation with a heavy heart. The tide turned. Vicksburg fell, and the "Great Father of Waters went unvexed to the sea." At Gettysburg the valor of the Army of the Potomac, aided by fortune, "that name for the unknown combinations of infinite power," wrought out for the country a great deliverance. It was a source of grievous disappointment to Mr. Lincoln that Meade did not

follow Lee and crush him and thus end the war. He is said to have expressed regret that he did not assume command of the army.

Meade, like McClellan, was a defensive and not an offensive general, and little could be expected of a general who desired to hold a review of his army when Lee was ravaging Pennsylvania, and who had prepared his order for retreat on the second day of battle, and was only prevented from issuing it by the thunder of Longstreet's guns; little to expect of a general whose army had to be "hammered into position" by the army of the enemy.

"And thus the battle summer rose to its climax in the clash and clamor of Titanic war, which, spending its fury on the soil of Pennsylvania, was echoed back from the borders of Mississippi and the Alpine heights of the Cumberland Mountains."

Rosecrans in the West, like Halleck and Buell, McClellan, Burnside, and Hooker, had proved a failure, and the indomitable Grant was called to extricate his army from its perilous position at Chattanooga. Soon his legions were seen climbing the rugged heights of Look-out and Missionary Ridge, and Mr. Lincoln was relieved of a weight of anxiety.

It was at Gettysburg in November of that year that his fame as an orator was to be forever established. Here he spoke "immortal words that were to commemorate immortal deeds." Said he, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." His modesty made him a false prophet. So long as the English language is spoken, the world will remember what he said there. Ay! More! "It

will live until languages are dead and lips are dust." He was sublime because he was natural. What he said was from the heart and brain. What Mr. Everett said was from the brain alone, and has never been read and never will be. Well might he say to Mr. Lincoln, "How gladly would I exchange my hundred pages to have been the author of your twenty lines!"

The war went on. The South, in the desperation of despair made preparations for the final struggle. Mr. Lincoln called Grant to the chief command. He had always been a friend to Grant. When others demanded his discharge, he said, "This man fights; I can not spare him." Grant, having the entire confidence of Mr. Lincoln, was allowed full control of military affairs throughout the country. It was quite time that this should be done.

We are not of those who believe that Mr. Lincoln's conduct of military affairs was a success. He was not a good judge of men for military command. The ways of the politician too often controlled his judgment. One of the reasons for his appointment of Meade to the command of the Army of the Potomac, was that he was a Democrat. We believe he mistook the sentiments of the people. What they wanted was victory, the South whipped, and we feel certain that he would have been sustained in a more Jacksonian treatment of his commanders and of the Rebels. He never assumed to be a leader of the people: "I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me." We believe that thousands of lives were wasted because he failed to control events. If it is said that the Republic needed chastening and purifying, and these sacrifices must needs be, then argu-

ment is useless. We, however, are yet to be convinced that it was a necessity for an army of one hundred thousand men to sit down before fifteen thousand and die like sheep, as was the case at Yorktown; yet to be convinced that the useless slaughter at Fredericksburg was a necessity; yet to be convinced that Grant's campaign from the Rapidan to the James where a great army was buried, a holocaust made to liberty, in order to reach a point that could have been reached in three days by water, was either good generalship or a necessity; yet to be convinced that, owing to the stubbornness of Grant and Stanton, it was a necessity to starve thousands and tens of thousands of men to death in Andersonville.

Notwithstanding this terrible war had dragged along for years, and disaster had followed disaster, the "plain people," as he termed them, still had confidence in Mr. Lincoln. They knew of his personal sympathy, but appreciated his position, so well stated by him when denying a personal appeal: "I desire to say that there is no man who feels a deeper or more tender sympathy than I do, with all cases of individual sorrow, anxiety, and grief like yours, which these unhappy troubles occasion; but I see not how I can prevent or relieve them. I am here to administer this Government, to uphold the Constitution, to maintain the Union of the United States. That is my oath; before God and man, I must, I mean to the best of my ability, to keep that oath; and, however much my personal feelings may sympathize with individual sorrows and anxieties, I must not yield to them. They must all give way before the great public exigencies of the country!" They knew he bore the sorrows of the Nation in his great

heart, and his sympathetic nature endeared him more and more to them. They knew him to be a "true, earnest, patriotic man, gifted with eminent common sense." When he wished to communicate with them, he did so in plain and convincing language, and his letters and state papers "stand among the finest ornaments of our political literature." When he did not wish to communicate with them, he turned them aside with a playful and pointed story of which the following is a sample. I think it has never appeared in print. A party of political or religious cranks (I do not remember which) called to instruct him in his duty, during the darkest days of the Rebellion. He listened patiently, and finally replied, "Your call and what you say reminds me of Jack Armstrong who lived in the Sangamon Bottoms. Jack went to town, and having become well loaded with the ardent, late at night he undertook to return home. The mud was deep, and Jack's course devious, and his progress slow. There came up a tremendous thunder-storm. Jack struggled on, aided somewhat by the flashes of lightning. Suddenly there came a brilliant flash and a terrible crash of thunder. This was too much for Jack. He fell upon his knees in the mud and prayed, 'O Lord God Almighty! if it is all the same to you, I would like to have a good deal more lightning and a damn sight less noise.'" With this story Mr. Lincoln bowed them out.

The "plain people" demanded his renomination, although this was opposed by many leading politicians and strong men of his own party. He was unanimously renominated. In connection with his renomination he made a serious mistake, one that had far-reaching

influences and an unfortunate effect on the history of this country which is felt to this day. He still believed in Border State influence, and it was by his request that Mr. Hamlin, a statesman true and tried, was set aside, and Andrew Johnson of Tennessee nominated for Vice-President. Who can measure the evil consequence of that mistake? Be it also said, to the shame of Massachusetts Republicans, who, with that magnificent capacity for blundering that has ever characterized them, that they discarded Hamlin, and were largely, very largely, responsible for the nomination of Johnson.

After an exciting canvass, Mr. Lincoln was re-elected. Grant held Lee as in a vise at Petersburg. Sherman marched from the mountains to the sea. Sheridan swept the valley with fire and sword. Farragut, lashed at the mast-head, had passed the forts and destroyed the rebel gunboats at Mobile Bay. The Confederacy staggered under these blows, and all felt that peace was to come soon, and come to stay.

Again he stands upon the steps of the Capitol, as the chosen ruler of the people. Four years before he had pleaded for peace. The plea was unheeded. Four years of terrible, desolating war had passed, and the cause of it had been destroyed. He watched through the night, and now he saw the luster of the dawn. In his inaugural "he poured out the whole devotion and tenderness of his great soul." The words, "with malice towards none, with charity for all," was its keynote, as it had been the keynote of his life. The English papers termed it "one of the sublimest state papers of modern times, expressed in language worthy of the grandest theocratic eras."

Appomattox followed. The rebellion against the government on account of its devotion to liberty was ended. The leaders who had seized upon the pillars of our political temple, disappeared amidst the ruin they had wrought.

Mr. Lincoln's work was done when, unheralded and unattended, he walked the streets of Richmond, surrounded by those he had liberated, who were dancing, shouting, crying for joy. When he, the great ruler of a great people, a conquering hero, raised his hat and bowed to this despised race, the forms and ceremonies of centuries were ignored, and caste received a mortal wound.

He had lived to see peace dawn upon his beloved country; lived to win the respect, confidence, and the sympathy of all nations and peoples; lived to confute the ruling classes of the Old World who said, "The great Republic is no more!" lived to hear the well-earned plaudit of his countrymen, "Well done, good and faithful servant." And now with his heart full of thoughts of peace and joy, charity and reconciliation, when about to raise his hands, "not to strike, but in benediction," in an hour of relaxation the bullet of the vile assassin entered his brain, and he passed "beyond the reach of human harm or help, to that vast realm of silence or joy where the innumerable dwell."

His remains were borne in solemn procession over our great rivers, along the seaside, beyond the mountains, across the prairie, to their final resting-place among those he loved and who loved him. Not only his own countrymen, but all the world stood and mourned by the portals of that tomb. In the ages to come it will be a true Mecca of those who honor the memory of a good name. "Fine gold

such as this could not be shattered by the shot of the assassin. He will live in the hearts and minds of the whole Anglo-Saxon race as one of the noblest examples of that race's highest qualities." The verdict of mankind will be that —

“His life was gentle, and the elements  
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, — ‘This is a man.’ ”













